

311715Z May 00

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ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AGRE-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	COME-00
	DINT-00	DODE-00	DATE-00	ANHR-00	SRFP-00	DS-00	EB-00
	FAAE-00	FBIE-00	VC-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00
	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01
	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	STR-00
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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6174  
INFO SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY  
NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 002894

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/31/00

TAGS: PGOV PHUM KDEM EAGR PINR ZI PREL

SUBJECT: ZANU-PF LEGAL SECRETARY ON LAND INVASIONS AND  
ELECTION VIOLENCE

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR GAYLE SMITH

LONDON FOR PFLAUMER

PARIS FOR BISA WILLIAMS

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DEPARTMENT PASS TO USTR FOR ROSA WITAKER

CLASSIFIED BY POLITICAL OFFICER MAKILA JAMES, REASONS  
1.5 (B) AND (D).

REFTEL: HARARE 2820

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: ZANU-PF'S LEGAL SECRETARY, EDDISON ZVOGBO TOLD AMBASSADOR MCDONALD MAY 31 THAT THE "WAR VETERANS" WHO ARE OCCUPYING COMMERCIAL FARMS WILL BE REMOVED SHORTLY AFTER THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION AT THE END OF JUNE. IN RESPONSE TO THE AMBASSADOR'S EXPRESSION OF SERIOUS CONCERN, ZVOGBO DISMISSED THE LEVEL OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE ACROSS THE COUNTRY AS LESS THAN WHAT HAS OCCURRED IN OTHER COUNTRIES, NOTABLY SOUTH AFRICA, DURING RECENT ELECTIONS. THE MINISTER IS CONFIDENT THAT THE MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE (MDC) WILL GET ONLY A HANDFUL OF THE PARLIAMENTARY SEATS AND ASSERTED THAT THE OPPOSITION PARTY WAS LOSING SUPPORT EVEN IN ITS URBAN BASE. THE MINISTER REITERATED THAT INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVERS ARE WELCOME AND THAT THE RULING PARTY WOULD ENSURE A PEACEFUL PROCESS. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) AMBASSADOR MCDONALD, ACCCOMPANIED BY DCM IRVING AND POLOFF, CALLED ON MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO AND ZANU-PF LEGAL SECRETARY EDDISON ZVOGBO ON MAY 31 FOR AN UPDATE ON THE RULING PARTY'S VIEWS ON THE LAND OCCUPATIONS AND ELECTION CHANCES, AND TO EXPRESS THE USG'S SERIOUS CONCERN ABOUT THE LEVEL OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND INTIMIDATION OCCURRING IN THE COUNTRY. ZVOGBO, A HARVARD-TRAINED LAWYER, WAS IN A COMBATIVE

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MOOD AS HE EXPOUNDED ON THE PROBLEMS HE EXPERIENCED IN CONVINCING THE COMMERCIAL FARM OCCUPIERS TO PREPARE TO VACATE THOSE PROPERTIES. ZVOGBO SAID THAT PRESIDENT MUGABE HAD DIRECTED HIM AND MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS, DUMISO DABENGWA, TO TALK TO THE OCCUPIERS ON FARMS IN MASVINGO PROVINCE WHERE THERE HAD BEEN PROBLEMS AMONG THE "WAR VETS" AND THE WHITE FARMERS, AND THEIR BLACK FARM WORKERS. THE PRESIDENT HAD INSTRUCTED THE MINISTERS TO INFORM THE OCCUPIERS THAT THEY MUST VACATE THE FARMS BEGINNING ON MAY 29 NOW THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD ENACTED LEGISLATION THAT WOULD ALLOW FOR AN EXPEDITED RESETTLEMENT PLAN (REFTEL).

¶3. (C) ZVOGBO SAID THE TWO MINISTERS, ACCOMPANIED BY WAR VETS LEADER, CHENJERAI "HITLER" HUNZVI, WERE UNSUCCESSFUL IN GETTING THE OCCUPIERS TO LISTEN TO THEIR MESSAGE TO VACATE THE PROPERTIES. THE MINISTER SAID HE "DETESTED" HUNZVI, THAT THE MAN WAS "CLEARLY CERTIFIABLY UNSTABLE," AND THAT HE HAD DISRUPTED THE MINISTERS' SPEECHES AND FRUSTRATED THEIR MISSION BY INSTRUCTING THE

OCCUPIERS TO REMAIN ON THE LAND UNTIL THE PRESIDENT TOLD THEM TO LEAVE. HUNZVI WILL, HOWEVER, BE DISPOSED OF BY THE GOVERNMENT AS SOON AS THE JUNE 24-25 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION IS COMPLETED, THE MINISTER STATED AND WILL NOT BE THE ZANU-PF CANDIDATE FOR THE CHIKOMBA CONSTITUENCY. REPRESENTATIVES OF THE COMMERCIAL FARMERS UNION (CFU) WITH WHOM THE AMBASSADOR MET ON MAY 30 ALSO OPINED THAT HUNZVI WOULD LIKELY BE ARRESTED FOR ANY ONE OF THE SEVERAL LEGAL CHARGES PENDING AGAINST HIM AS SOON AS HE FINISHED SERVING THE RULING PARTY'S REELECTION PURPOSES.

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14. (C) DESPITE THESE DIFFICULTIES, ZVOGBO SAID THE WAR VETS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS COULD BE REMOVED IN ABOUT FIVE HOURS, AS SOON AS PRESIDENT MUGABE GAVE THE GO AHEAD TO DO SO. THIS COULD BE DONE WITHOUT ANY MILITARY INVOLVEMENT, MERELY EFFECTIVE POLICE ACTION, HE ADDED. THE MINISTER ASSERTED THAT THE LAND ISSUE NEEDS TO BE FINALLY RESOLVED AND THAT THE WAR VETS HAD ONLY FORCED THE GOVERNMENT TO ACCELERATE ITS EFFORTS TO ACQUIRE COMMERCIAL FARMS AND BEGIN TO RESETTLE PEOPLE. ONLY THE GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER, IS EMPOWERED TO RESETTLE PEOPLE, HE EMPHASIZED. THE MINISTER THEN STATED THAT THE PROBLEM IS LESS COMPLEX THAN IMAGINED, AS THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT EVEN NEED ALL THE LAND IT HAS DESIGNATED FOR RESETTLEMENT (841 FARMS) TO MEET THE DEMAND THAT EXISTS. SOUTH AFRICAN PRESIDENT MBEKI IS FACING A SIMILAR LAND DISTRIBUTION CRISIS AND SHOULD TAKE A LESSON FROM ZIMBABWE AND NOT WAIT TOO LONG TO ADDRESS IT, ZVOGBO STATED. THE MINISTER ALSO COMMENDED MBEKI FOR REPORTEDLY WORKING TO HELP IDENTIFY POSSIBLE FINANCING FOR ZIMBABWE'S LAND REFORM PROGRAM.

15. (C) AMBASSADOR McDONALD THEN PROBED THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO EFFECT AN ORDERLY LAND REFORM PROGRAM AFTER HAVING ENCOURAGED, AND IN MANY CASES, FACILITATED THE ILLEGAL LAND OCCUPATIONS OF THESE COMMERCIAL FARMS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 HARARE 002894

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ADDITIONALLY, THE AMBASSADOR EMPHASIZED THAT THE SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS OCCURRING ON THESE OCCUPIED PROPERTIES, INCLUDING MURDER, BEATINGS AND RAPE, WAS IN LARGE PART BECAUSE OF THE PERCEPTION THAT THE GOVERNMENT CONDONED SUCH ACTION THROUGH ITS FAILURE TO ENFORCE THE LAW. THE GOVERNMENT'S ABDICATION OF ITS RESPONSIBILITY  
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TO PROTECT ITS CITIZENS WAS UNACCEPTABLE TO THE USG, THE AMBASSADOR EMPHASIZED.

ELECTION OUTLOOK

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16. (C) THE MDC IS NO SERIOUS THREAT TO ZANU-PF, BUT MERELY "BOYS" PLAYING POLITICS IN A MAN'S WORLD, ACCORDING TO ZVOGBO. THE MINISTER ESTIMATED THAT THE MDC WOULD GET NO MORE THAN TEN OF THE 120 CONTESTED PARLIAMENTARY SEATS. THE MDC WAS MOST LIKELY TO TAKE SEATS IN BULAWAYO AND HARARE, ALTHOUGH ZVOGBO ASSERTED THAT THE OPPOSITION PARTY WAS LOSING SUPPORT IN THE LATTER AREA. ZVOGBO DOWNPLAYED THE WIDESPREAD POLITICAL VIOLENCE THAT IS OCCURRING AND ARGUED THAT ZIMBABWE'S PRE-ELECTION VIOLENCE WAS MUCH LESS THAN WHAT TOOK PLACE IN SOUTH AFRICA AND OTHER PLACES.

17. (C) AMBASSADOR McDONALD STRESSED THAT THERE WERE CLEARLY GOZ AND ZANU-PF ORGANIZED AND SYSTEMATIC HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS TAKING PLACE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, TARGETING FARM WORKERS AND TEACHERS, AS ALLEGED SUPPORTERS OF THE MDC. THE HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL PEACE CORPS PROGRAM, WHICH PRIMARILY ASSISTED RURAL ZIMBABWEAN SCHOOLS, WAS RECENTLY REDUCED BY TWO-THIRDS ITS VOLUNTEER STAFF BECAUSE OF THE INSECURITY CREATED BY THIS GOVERNMENT-CONDONED VIOLENCE, THE AMBASSADOR INFORMED. THE MINISTER JUSTIFIED THIS VIOLENCE BY NOTING THAT IN SOME COMMUNITIES PARENTS HAD COMPLAINED THAT TEACHERS WERE OPENLY SUPPORTING MDC AND TEACHING OPPOSITION SLOGANS IN THE CLASSROOMS. THE AMBASSADOR  
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RESPONDED THAT THE RURAL SCHOOLS AND ZIMBABWEAN CHILDREN ARE MOST ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY THE THREATS AGAINST TEACHERS AND OTHER CIVIL SERVANTS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND THE GOVERNMENT HAD TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS SITUATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES. THE MINISTER WHILE DEPLORING VIOLENCE THEN REITERATED HIS POSITION THAT EVERYONE ELSE IN THE REGION HAS HAD WORSE ELECTIONS. ZVOGBO CONCEDED, HOWEVER, THAT WHILE ZIMBABWE WOULD HAVE A "FREE" ELECTION, IT WOULD NOT BE A "FAIR" ONE, WHICH HE ATTRIBUTED TO THE RULING PARTY'S NUMERICAL AND INCUMBENCY ADVANTAGES.

18. (C) THE MINISTER FEIGNED OFFENSE THAT WE WOULD QUESTION THE TRANSPARENCY AND INTEGRITY OF ZIMBABWE'S ELECTORAL PROCESS. HE NOTED THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD TOLD SECRETARY ALBRIGHT THAT INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVERS

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WERE WELCOME AND THAT HIS GOVERNMENT STOOD BY THAT POSITION AS IT HAD NOTHING TO HIDE FROM THE WORLD.  
(NOTE: CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS HAVE TOLD EMBOFFS THAT THEY ARE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE PRIVACY OF THE BALLOT BASED ON PREVIOUS HISTORY OF NUMBERING BALLOTS AND CORRELATING THEM WITH INDIVIDUAL VOTER NAMES. END NOTE). NEVERTHELESS, ZVOGBO REPEATED THAT INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS WERE WELCOME AND STRESSED THAT ZANU-PF HAD EMBARKED UPON A CAMPAIGN TO ENSURE A PEACEFUL ELECTION.

COMMENT

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19. (C) ZVOGBO IS A FEISTY, INTELLIGENT, AND FRANK SPEAKING INTERLOCUTOR WHO MAY NOT ALWAYS BELIEVE HIS OWN  
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RHETORIC, BUT IS WILLING TO TELL US BLUNTLY WHAT SENIOR GOZ OFFICIALS MAY BE THINKING ABOUT US POLICY AND POSITIONS. IN THIS REGARD, THE LAND ISSUE IS AN AREA THAT THE RULING PARTY APPEARS TO BELIEVE IT NOW HAS THE UPPER HAND ON AND THAT IT CAN CONTROL. CONSEQUENTLY, THE GOVERNMENT IS UNRECEPTIVE TO ANY ARGUMENT THAT ITS APPROACH IS WRONG. THE CFU IS APPARENTLY STRIKING THE BEST DEAL IT CAN AND, PERHAPS ALONG WITH PRESIDENT MBEKI, HAS JOINED THE CHORUS OF THOSE SEEKING FUNDS TO HELP ZIMBABWE FIND A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM. ADDITIONALLY, ZVOGBO IS REPEATING THE PARTY LINE BY DOWNPLAYING THE PROBLEM OF VIOLENCE.

MCDONALD

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